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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the definition of culture and its role in the interpretation of the language, history, ethnic and social differences of the Chamorro people. Also examined are stereotypes and misconceptions about the Chamorro culture that are the result of social prejudices and ignorance of the Chamorro language. The paper includes guidelines for defining objectives, and teaching, selecting and preparing instructional materials about the history and people of the Chamorro culture, with emphasis on Chamorro values, children's cultural backgrounds and views of culture. (JCD)

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TEACHING THE CHAMORRO CULTURE

By

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TEACHING THE CHAMORRO CULTURE

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UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

Prepared for a Workshop for Chamorro Language Teachers

Culture - Why Teach It?

In order to fully recognize the meaning and importance of culture to children, teachers, must first fully understand culture themselves. Culture is around us continually, it affects what we do and how we do it, but most importantly it affects how we perceive the world. Our judgements of good and improper behavior, good adult-child relationships and classroom decorum are all culturally-influenced. It is other things as well such as food, customs, traditions and handicrafts. All of these things provide the context upon which we each construct our individuality.

When we use the term culture, we are not talking about a thing, a commodity or an object. We are talking about human beings and their systems of operation. We are describing how a group of people have developed unique ways of confronting the problems people everywhere in the world confront. What makes each group of people different is not so much our physical appearances (white, black, brown) or even our language, but the systems we use to operate and interact with each other. Although language provides the basis for culture-learning, it is only the beginning step in trying to understand the complicated ways of a people. Anyone can learn Spanish, but that does not make you a Spaniard. It will help you understand Spanish ways much easier (than someone who doesn't speak Spanish), but it is only the first step in understanding the pains, joys and essence of what being Spanish is all about. It is the same for learning Chamorro or for learning English. All Chamorro teachers know English, and many Chamorros have known English for generations, but it didn't make them "Americans." It made the process of Americanization easier, but Americanizing the people used much more than just knowing English.

This is also true, for the Chamorro language. Knowing Chamorro doesn't make one fully understand the essence of being Chamorro. That has to be learned through many years of experience. Language is a great tool in the culture learning process, but other items must also be taken into account. If culture is ignored, then the

lessons of learning Chamorro for the children will lose much of their significance. They will begin to ask of what importance or relevance is learning Chamorro if they cannot see where and how the language is used. The Chamorro language was developed for use by a group of human beings. This group has a view of the world, has opinions about how to do things, likes certain foods and enjoys particular holidays. Its language was developed to be used in all these areas of human activity which they developed. Teaching language without culture is teaching without heart, without soul and without commitment.

DEFINITION

The Cross Cultural Resource Center at Cal state Sacramento has developed the following definition. "Culture is a dynamic, creative and continuous process including behaviors, values and substance learned and shared by people that guides them in their struggle for survival and gives meaning to their lives."
The CCRC listed the following as the major characteristics of culture.

1. It is dynamic
2. It is a process
3. It provides a context for behavior and values
4. It is learned
5. It is shared
6. It is creative
7. It is continuous
8. It gives meaning to life and experience through symbols.

In this explanation, the role of symbols is not stated as strongly as perhaps it should be. When we talk about learning, giving meaning to our lives or understanding the essence of a group of people, we are talking about symbolic teaching and learning. In other words, we interpret meaning through symbols. Our sense of cultural identity, belonging, commonality with others and communication within groups is facilitated by symbols. Symbols can be objects to which we attach meaning and through which we communicate meaning to others. Language itself is a complicated system of symbols through which we attach and receive meaning. Consider these words and the meaning which is powerful in them:

Chamorro	English
mamahlao	romance
chenchule'	patriotic
fa'ga'ga'	pioneer
layo'	individualistic
pikaru	headstrong

Without growing up in either a Chamorro or "American" context, you would find it difficult to fully understand the possible meanings of each word. Each word when said slowly creates images in our minds. It is this symbolization of our environment which gives us meaning. If we symbolize with others in much the same way, then we probably share the same cultural background. A dish of latiya to some might mean good times associated with relatives while to others it is a quaint Chamorro dish. A bowl of bunelos dago may mean Christmas to some while others think of it as unsweetened doughnuts. The symbolization of these rather simple food items is a product of our culture.

Schools and their role in symbolizing the world is enormous to the child. The schools decide what symbols are good and important by pointing to certain heroes, by choosing certain langauges and by making a fuss out of certain events. If you are to develop cultural understanding and appreciation, you must celebrate Chamorro symbols and do so without hesitation Do it openly, loudly and colorfully. It is only through this vehicle that pride will be developed in a healthy fashion. For Chamorro culture teaching, we must also learn how to counteract negative images about Chamorros which have developed through the years.

Some Quotes Worth Thinking About

-- When you kill a language and culture, you kill people

"The extermination of a language, of a culture and of a people, are all one and the same thing . . ."

Pierre and Holldorsson, et all
Resue (1962)

-- When you know only one language, you know only one world

"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

Ludwig Wittgenstein

-- To be free, we must have our own models for freedom

"No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption."

Paulo Freire

-- To Understand Others, We Must Be Able To Get Into The Emotions Of Others

If we seek to understand a people, we have to try to put ourselves, as far as we can, in that particular historical and cultural background. . . It is not easy for a person of one country to enter into the background of another country.. So there is great irritation, because one fact that seems obvious to us is not immediately accepted by the other party or doesn't seem obvious to him at all... But the extreme irritation will go when we think...that he is just differently conditioned and simply can't get out of that condition....One has to recognize that whatever the future may hold, countries and peoples differ in their approach and their ways, in their approach to life and their ways of living and thinking. In order to understand them we have to understand their way of life and approach. If we wish to convince them, we have to use their language as far as we can, not language in the narrow sense of the word, but the language of the mind. That is one neccessity. Something that goes even much further than that is not the appeal to logic and reason, but some kind of emotional awareness of the other people.--

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: Visit to America
New York, John Day Co., 1950, pp. 58-59.

--In a situation like Guam's, the memory of our past is deliberately stopped. When we are allowed to think about it, we become embarrassed instead of proud. "The colonized seems condemned to lose his memory....Memory is not purely a mental operation. Just as the memory of an individual is the fruit of his history and physiology, that of a people rests upon its institutions. Now the colonized's institutions are dead or petrified. He scarcely belives in those which continued to show signs of life and daily confirms their ineffectiveness. He often becomes ashamed of these institutions as of a ridiculous and overaged monument."

Albert Memmi

Teaching About Chamorros

The first consideration is the materials that you use. Do not use any materials just because it has the word Chamorro in it. It doesn't make it healthy, authentic or valuable. Some of the damaging items are the books about Guam history by Janice Beaty and Paul Carano. They both tend to deny that Chamorros exist (instead we are "Guamanians") and portray us as quaint, friendly, superstitious and a simple people. Moreover, Chamorros never do anything in those books. Americans, Spaniards, Filipinos, Englishmen and Japanese are the doers. The Chamorros sit back and let things happen to them. Imagine what such an image has on children trying to understand the essence of being Chamorro.

The second consideration is your own attitude towards the Chamorro culture and people. How do you perceive Chamorros? Do you see them as superstitious, quaint and friendly? In other words, do you think Chamorros can be doers, can be unique and can be viewed as valuable on their own terms? Are your own attitudes a product of the stereotype of Chamorros as lazy, slow-moving, fun-loving, not very serious people. Do you look at Guam as a small rock? Do you think Chamorros are some kind of mixed breed of people and are impure? If you have some of these attitudes, how are children supposed to understand the Chamorros view of the world and take pride in it?

Here are some guidelines for materials selection and preparation:

1) *If you use the term Guamanian, make sure it is separate from Chamorro. Many people who are not Chamorros are using the term Guamanian to identify themselves.*

2) *For pictures, how many identifiable Chamorro faces are there? In what roles are Chamorros portrayed (are they always ranchers, preparing food or other stereotypes)?*

3) *When Chamorro culture is being portrayed, are the people always working on the ranch or having a party? Don't Chamorros do other things like tell stories about the meaning of life, go to a market, go to a doctor, go to a suruhano, travel, go picking betel nut, go play bingo, etc.? If the party-image is all that Chamorros can live up to, who is going to take them seriously.*

4) *Watch for words like quaint, crafty, superstitious, native, typical, pagan. They create unhealthy images.*

5) *In pictures, how are the Chamorros dressed? Do they look like Chamorros? Celebrate flat noses and darkness. (Kuanto biahi di makonne' i mas apaka' na patgon para si Santa Maria gi dimimorian Christmas)*

6) *Who are in position of authority, leadership in your classroom materials.*

7) *Do all the inventions and wonderful gadgets of the world belong to Europeans or Americans?*

8) *Keep in mind that Chamorros discovered Guam - Magellan was merely the first European visitor. The Chamorros didn't rebel against the Spaniards, they tried to drive out the invaders. When the Spaniards and Americans win in a battle, it is called a victory. When the Chamorros or Japanese killed people, it is called a massacre. These words create images about whole groups of people.*

All of us on Guam, must re-align our thinking about Guam and Chamorros. These are some perspectives I think we should adopt.

1) *Guam is not an outpost or the westernmost extension of American-it has a proud and valuable heritage of its own. It operated as an independent entity before the first European settled in what is now the United States.*

2) *The Chamorro experience is not "just like" the experience of immigrant groups to the U.S. - The Chamorros are not immigrants to the U.S., U.S. residents are immigrants to Guam.*

3) *Culture is learned and not tied to bloodline. Purity in anybody is a myth. Chamorros are frequently characterized as mixed bloods and are therefore impure or not authentic people - we are like the boonie dogs who are envious of the French poodle or Scottish terrier.*

4) *Chamorros, like any cultural group, are not all of the same mind. They do not all do things the same way or believe exactly the same things. They have generally the same background and experiences.*

5) *Chamorro belief systems (taotaomo'na, superiority of nature) are not superstitions to be put down in schools. Nobody puts down Santa Claus which is obviously untrue.*

6) *Chamorro culture is complicated and not easily understood. It is not to be found only in its symbolic renderings in terms of food and handicrafts.*

Chamorro Values - The Building Blocks of Curriculum

For a cultural curriculum to be successful, a plan of attack must be developed. This plan should not be based merely on activities, but on a substantive concept which you are developing. The core of any culture is its value system. In other words, when any cultural group engages in any activity (fandango, bautismu, bela) or custom (manngingе', chenchule', ikaj, it is acting out its values. Whatever this group of people think is important in life, will be reflected in its activities and customs. You must have some idea of what these values are and transmit them in small doses to children so that they may share in them and understand their importance.

These are five Chamorro core values which were identified by elders on Rota in a BBTP Workshop in February, 1979.

1) *Family authority (your family and relatives come before others)*
2) *Interdependence of man to other man (recognize your obligations to others)*
3) *Interdependence of man to nature, respect for his surroundings (the jungle and ocean must be respected)*
4) *Old age brings wisdom (older people know more)*
5) *Sense of mamahlao (never draw attention to yourself, bring disgrace upon your family)*

The following terms are culturally loaded and can be used for concept building:

ina'fa' maolek	che''o
chenchule'	respetu
ika	mannginge'
saina	taimamahlao
patgon	komplimentu
matlina/patlinu	bata'

Implementation

Value (Controlling element of lesson)	Activity/Custom (focus of lesson)	Objective
Interdependence (manadipendi i taotao)	fandango	could be related to language learning (such as learning 10 vocabulary words)
respect for elders	mamaisen saina	

If you took each one of these values and covered them with different and very short lessons, at least once a semester, you would achieve some understanding of Chamorro culture. The lesson objectives don't have to be explicitly related to the value, but over a period of time, the values will become clear to the child.

Children' View of Culture/Ethnicity

Once we are in control of our ideas about culture, it will do well to examine how children view culture and their ethnic background. Teachers too often want children to feel pride in Chamorro culture the way adults do. We must recognize that pride and understanding is a long process that will not come in three or four lessons. Children, by and large, are a captive audience over whom television, playing with their friends and family have greater influence than you as a single teacher. Don't expect too much too soon.

Children (particularly under 10 years) recognize differences as matters of good and bad, right or wrong. You have a great task ahead of you to get the idea across that being different is alright. Since cultural differences in schools is the core of our task, we must first get across the idea that being different is o.k. You must do this repeatly and have a sincere openness to cultural diversity.

When children are under 10, they frequently overlook cultural or ethnic diversity. When it is brought to their attention, they think of it in terms of which one is right. Given the nature of our schools, television and the movies, they already have an answer - Chamorro is old, stale, and sometimes embarrasing. If you don't bring it to their attention, thes ideas will continue. If you don't build pride, these ideas won't be successfully challenged.

Children normally think of things in opposites. They identify others as boy or girl, family or non-family, community or non-community persons. They must be brought to the doorstep of diversity, allowed a peek and shown that it is alright to be different and that it is o.k. to be proud of them.

When children beocme autonomous of others' ideas of good and bad (around 9-11 years), they also start identifying ethnicity. If they have no background on dealing with such issues, their identifying behaviors may be very negative.

Objectives of a Culture Curriculum

1. *--Building togetherness, pride and sense of peoplehood*
2. *--Building respect for and understanding cultural diversity*
3. *--Building knowledge of Chamorro culture*

Notice that the first two objectives are affective. They relate to feelings, emotions, and regard for oneself and others. Frequently, we only look at Objective 3 (building knowledge) and engage in such activities as hat-making, saltmaking and coconut grating. We should keep the first two in mind.

1. Building a concept a Chamorro peoplehood and pride

Ideas:

1) Make a calendar of historical events in which Chamorros were prominent. Everyday, (or at least once a week) begin the class by explaining what happened today in history (or prepare a child to explain to others). Ask a few discussion questions which might even use math.

Example:

Jan. 4, 1971 - Inaguration of Carlos Camacho, first elected governor of Guam.

- Hafa masusedi pa'go na ha'ani gi manma'pos na tiempo?

- Kuantos anos tatti na masusedi esti?

- Kao la'la'la' ha' esti na taotao?

- Sa' hafa na impottanti pa'go na ha'ani gi historian i tano'-ta?

Feb. 2, 1669 - Sanvitores dedicates cathedral

- Hafa masusedi pa'go na ha'ani gi manma'pos na tiempo?

- Kuantos anos titti na masusedi esti?

- Hayi este na taotao as Sanvitores?

- Hafa depotsi na'an-na i Katridat giya Hagatna?

- Kao guaha na umosmi misa hao guihi?

2) Guam Flag-

Prepare a ditto hand-out, have them paint it, ask what they think it symbolizes. The Guam seal was established April 4, 1930.

3) Sing "Fanohge Chamorro." Do a lesson on the man who wrote "Stand Ye Chamorro" (Dr. Ramon Sablan) and the lady who translated it (Mrs. Lagrimas Untalan).

4) Do a map lesson on Chamorro cousins in the Northern Marianas. Provide a concer for their cut-out maps and information they might find.

5) Teach them to introduce themselves in Chamorro fashion,

Guahi si_____, hagan _____.

6) *Select Chamorro heroes to emulate (Kepuha, Mata'pang, F.B. Leon Guerrero, Pale' Palomo, Pale' Duenas, etc. village commissioner, Bishop Flores)*

2- *Building Respect for Diversity*

Ideas:

1) *Do an extended lesson on world languages, developing the following concepts*

a) *Languages reflect the needs and lives of people. A display chart like this may get the idea across:*

Words about cars:

English	*Chamorro*
transmission	*kareta*
sedan	*attomobet*
convertible	
pick-up	
radiator	

Words about coconut

Chamorro	*English*
niyok	*coconut*
manha	
binga'	
ma'ason	
pontan	

Words about rice:

Chamorro	*English*
hineksa'	*rice*
fa'e'	
pugas	

b) *Languages sometimes use other words to describe new things.*

		literal meaning
light bulb	-	*a root plant that gives off light*
batkon airi	-	*a ship that goes in the air*
kahon ais	-	*a box of ice*
key ring	-	*a ring for a key*
makinan mangge'	-	*a machine that writes*

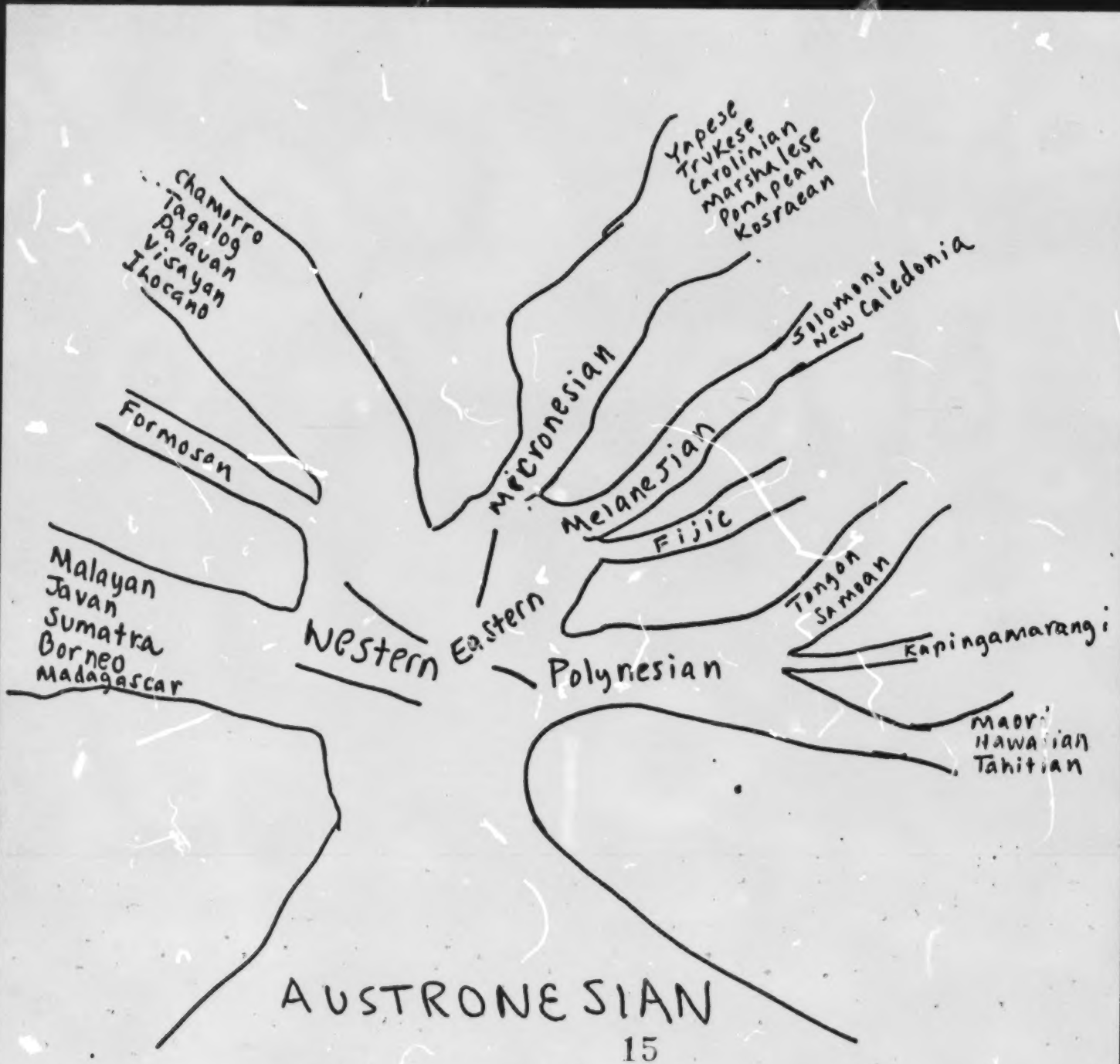
2) Make a language tree to show where English come from and where Chamorro comes from. The trees for both follows. Ask them to find where these languages are spoken on world, European and Pacific maps

3- Building Knowledge of Chamorro Culture

Do the usual activities which are termed culture.

Suggestions:

1) Use the regular classroom teacher in your lessons
2) Offer to do a lesson on culture with her/him during a time other than Chamorro
3) Use parents as much as possible and SPIMA (Setbisio para i Manamko')



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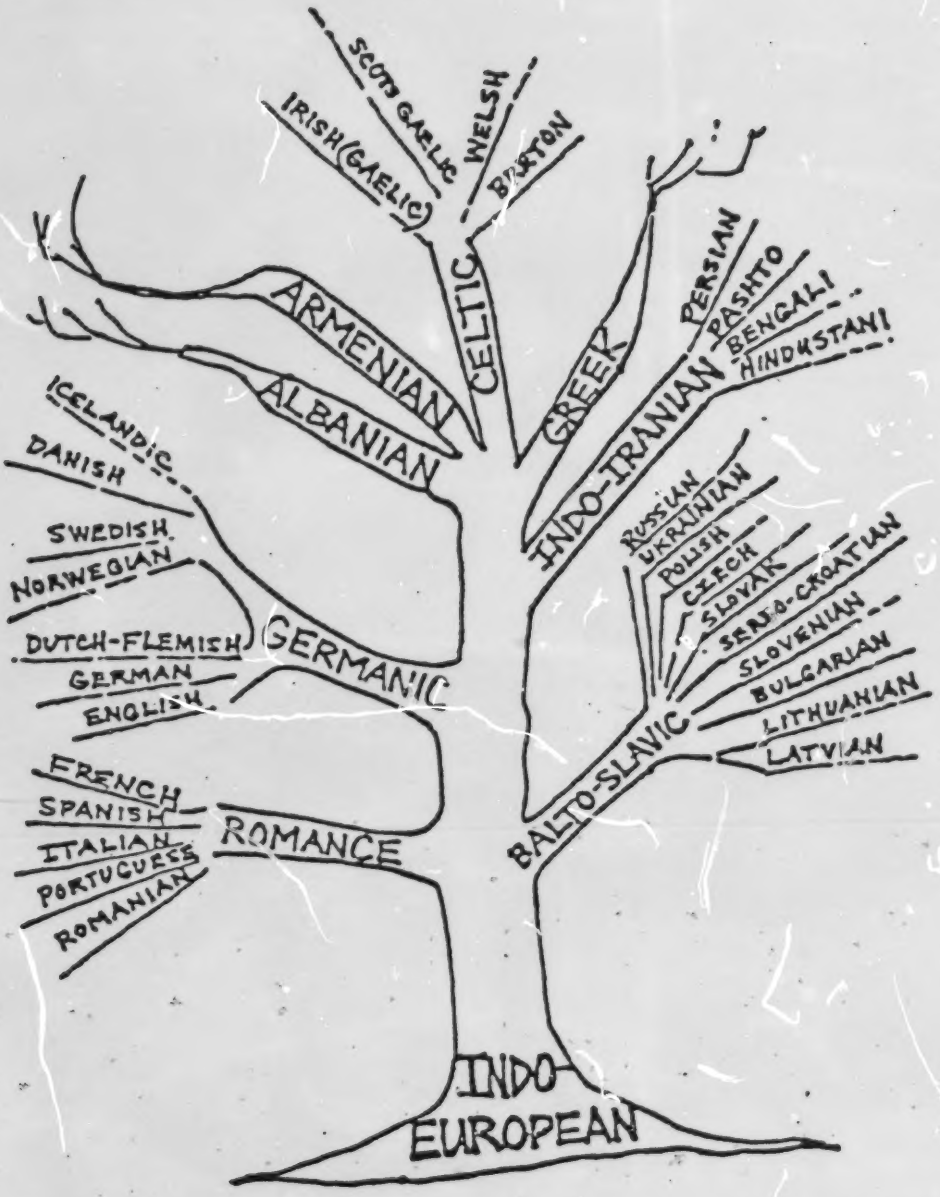
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